

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----065648 281325Z /72

O R 281230Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8464
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3578

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PERP, PBOR, LE, IS
SUBJ: FACING UP TO HADDAD AND SHIDIAC

1. SUMMARY. PAKRADOUNI SUGGESTS THAT FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS IS UNWILLING TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO DECISIVE GOL ACTION ON THE STATUS OF MAJOR HADDAD AND MAJOR SHIDIAC BECAUSE OF POLITICAL INTIMIDATION FROM CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL. SARKIS MAY BE WILLING TO RISK ACTING ON THEIR STATUS ANYWAY, PROVIDED THAT HE CAN BE ASSURED THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT SEEK TO TORPEDO THE EFFORT IN THE SOUTH OR ENCOURAGE THE LEBANESE FRONT IN BEIRUT TO AGITATE AGAINST IT. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI JUNE 27. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION OF SOUTH LEBANON QUESTION WITH PRESIDENT

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SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS PRECEEDING DAY.

3. ACCORDING TO PAKRADOUNI, ENTRY OF LEBANESE ARMY INTO SOUTH LEBANON IS CONTINGENT ON TWO FACTORS: (1) ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF UNIFIL CONTROL OF SOUTHERN BORDER AREA CURRENTLY CONTROLLED BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, HADDAD AND SHIDIAC; (2) DISPOSITION OF THE STATUS OF

HADDAD AND SHIDIAC THEMSELVES. ON THE LATTER QUESTION, PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER HOSS IS INSISTING THAT HADDAD AND SHIDIAC BE HANDLED IN A FASHION IDENTICAL TO LEFTIST BREAKAWAY ARMY OFFICERS, SUCH AS LT. AHMED KHATIB. A VIABLE MINIMAL FIRST STEP IN PAKRADOUNI'S VIEW WOULD BE TO TRANSFER HADDAD AND SHIDIAC TO THE DISPOSITION OF THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS IN BEIRUT, THAT IS, SIMPLY MOVING THEM FROM THE SOUTH. SARKIS AND BOUTROS, HOWEVER, FEAR THAT THIS WILL PROVOKE MAJOR REPERCUSSIONS FROM HARDLINING ELEMENTS OF THE LEBANESE FRONT - FROM CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL AND FROM BACHIR GEMAYEL ON THE STREETS.

4. BOUTROS, ACCORDING TO PAKRADOUNI, IS UNWILLING TO ASSUME DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY IN HIS CAPACITY AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE FOR ANY ACTION TO BRING HADDAD AND SHIDIAC UNDER CONTROL. IN THEIR DISCUSSION, BOUTROS HAD SAID TO SARKIS THAT ANY ACTION ON HADDAD AND SHIDIAC WOULD HAVE TO BE THROUGH ANOTHER MINISTER OF DEFENSE. PAKRADOUNI NOTED THAT SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAD ONCE OBSERVED THAT BOUTROS WAS NOT AS COURAGEOUS AND DECISIVE AFTER THE BOMB IN MARCH 1977 (WHICH BLEW UP HALF OF HIS APARTMENT) AS BEFORE. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD NOT PUT MUCH STOCK IN KHADDAM'S OPINION AT THAT TIME, BUT HAD COME MORE AND MORE TO BELIEVE IT RECENTLY.

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5. DESPITE BOUTROS' OPPOSITION, PAKRADOUNI SAID HE BELIEVED THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD BE WILLING TO ACT ON HADDAD AND SHIDIAC, BUT UNDER ONE CONDITION: THE AMERICANS MUST TRANSMIT THE ISRAELI RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: IF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TAKES MINIMAL STEPS AGAINST HADDAD AND SHIDIAC, HOW WILL ISRAEL REACT? ESPECIALLY, WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MAKE SURE THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT ENCOURAGE CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL TO CAUSE TROUBLE IN BEIRUT? PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS LESS CONCERNED BY POSSIBLE OPEN DEFIANCE IN THE SOUTH THAN BY POSSIBLE TROUBLES IN BEIRUT. CHAMOUN COULD LAUNCH AN ATTACK AGAINST THE PRESIDENT IN THE POLITICAL ARENA; BACHIR AND HIS PHALANGE MILITIAS COULD, FOR STARTERS, INITIATE SOME KIND OF A GENERAL STRIKE ACTION, HOLDING DEMONSTRATIONS AND BURNING TIRES IN THE STREET.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3578

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6. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE WAS TELLING THE PRESIDENT THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO ACT DECISIVELY ON THE HADDAD - SHIDIAC QUESTION, BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THE PERIOD OF TIME ALLOWED UNDER THE EMERGENCY LEGISLATION (THAT IS, BY JUNE 30), EVEN AT SOME RISK. IN PAKRADOUNI'S VIEW, THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO ACT DECISIVELY. IN THE LONGER RUN, HADDAD AND SHIDIAC COULD NOT SUCCESSFULLY DEFY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THE WHOLE QUESTION OF REVIVAL OF THE LEBANESE ARMY - WHICH WAS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF A UNIFIED LEBANON - DEPENDED ON MOVING THE ARMY INTO THE SOUTH, WHICH IN TURN DEPENDED ON THE REACTIONS OF THE LEBANESE FRONT IN BEIRUT AND OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH, WHICH IN TURN DEPENDED ON THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE. HE THEREFORE HOPED THAT THE USG UNDERSTOOD THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF GETTING A CLEAR COMMITMENT FROM THE ISRAELIS TO SUPPORT OR AT LEAST NOT HINDER GOL ACTION ON HADDAD-SHIDIAC AND
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ON SENDING THE ARMY SOUTH.

7. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE THOUGHT THAT UNIFIL WAS EVER SO SLOWLY SUCCEEDING IN ESTABLISHING ITS CONTROL OF THE CHRISTIAN-HELD AREAS ALONG THE BORDER. "ILS SONT

SERIEUX." HE OPINED THAT THE ISRAELIS DID NOT REALLY
HAVE AN INTEREST IN SEEING UNIFIL SUCCEED IN THE SOUTH,
INTER ALIA BECAUSE IT WOULD SET A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT
FROM THE ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW: IF THE UN WERE TO
SUCCEED IN ENFORCING THE PEACE AND CONTROLLING ARMED
ELEMENTS IN THE SOUTH LEBANON ENVIRONMENT, THEN EVEN-
TUALLY THEY COULD DO SO IN A WEST BANK POLITICAL ENTITY
AS WELL. PARKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT03578
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780267-0590
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780614/aaaaalgk.tel
Line Count: 178
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 005ce57e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2185029
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FACING UP TO HADDAD AND SHIDIAC
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, PBOR, LE, IS, (BOUTROS, FUAD GEORGES), (HADDAD, SAAD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/005ce57e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014